

## International affairs cadre to build global relations

WASHINGTON — Air Force officials will begin training more than 100 officers to become international affairs specialists in a managed secondary career path.

Ultimately, as many as 3,000 will form a pool of experts in regional, political and military affairs who will advise combatant commanders worldwide, officials said.

The first group of field-grade officers will enter formal training in summer 2006. The following year, officials will select and train more than 150 officers, then 210 each year until a pool of 2,500 to 3,000 specialists is filled. The goal is to use that pool to fill about 650 positions with reoccurring requirements.

"The international affairs skills set is viewed as a core competency in the military," said Col. **Robert Sarnoski**, Air Force international Airmen division chief. "They're just as important as the weapon systems we field today."

The Air Force's initiative enhances the expeditionary capability by developing regional and international expertise, cultural sensitivity and language skills, allowing Airmen to build, sustain or enhance relations with international partners.

Colonel Sarnoski, a former defense

attaché in Bangkok, Thailand, who is fluent in Thai, put his skills to use following the Sept. 11 attacks by helping Thai officials integrate into Operations Iraqi and Enduring Freedom coalition forces.

"Senior leaders have asked for this program because they want and need officers with political-military experience," Colonel Sarnoski said.

The new program is tied directly to force development. Selected officers may receive additional education, language training and cultural immersion to prepare them for positions they will fill in the field. Officers will be designated on one of two secondary Air Force career tracks — the regional affairs strategist or political-military affairs strategist.

Regional affairs strategists will advise commanders and senior leaders on regional issues, interacting with foreign counterparts to work political-military issues and develop reliable international relationships.

Political military affairs strategists have similar duties, but need international political-military expertise without necessarily requiring language skills.

"The career path complements an officer's overall career development with international affairs experience

that contributes to success in the primary career field," said **Bruce S. Lemkin**, deputy undersecretary of the Air Force for international affairs. "We need officers with these skills in our expeditionary air and space force, leading our regionally focused missions and contingency deployments and successfully interacting with our allies, friends and partners around the world."

Officers with a strong track record and in-depth understanding and experience in Air Force operations, doctrine and strategy will be selected at the seven- to 12-year point of their careers. Air Force officials said they will "highly consider" officers with operational and maintenance backgrounds, as well as those with previously developed international skills.

"A key aspect of this program is balancing between the IAS career path and the officer's primary career specialty," Mr. Lemkin said. "Consistent with the Air Force's force-development concept, we are committed to keeping these officers proficient and competitive in their primary career field while making them international affairs experts."

— Tech. Sgt. David A. Jablonski  
Air Force Print News

## Loading fuel

MCCHORD AIR FORCE BASE, Wash. — Airmen at McChord Air Force Base, Wash., load pallets of fuel onto a C-17 Globemaster III to support its first polar airdrop. About 10,000 gallons of fuel were dropped to help National Science Foundation-funded scientists near the North Pole collect data on the effects of global climate change. The fuel will power generators, drilling equipment and a helicopter used to reach the buoys that measure water temperature, salinity and the speed and direction of Arctic Ocean currents. The last polar airdrop was flown in 2001 by the now-retired C-141 Starlifter.

by Kevin J. Tosh Jr.

